

The Conquest and British Administration of Palestine and (Greater) Syria: 1914-1920

A. Purpose of the Exhibit

The purpose of this postal history exhibit is to show the period of richest diversity in Palestine area philately. Mails that demonstrate the phases of the Palestine area conquest, organized by Force and chronology, are shown. The conflict saw the development of a British postal service for military and civilian use, as a direct product of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) activities. This Force was developed from troops of the British Force in Egypt, substantially augmented by ANZACs, who engaged in the disastrous campaign at Gallipoli, reorganized in Egypt to the EEF, then conquered Palestine and regional territories (Cilicia, Lebanon, Syria).

The early civilian mail of the time, the classic "First Interim," is shown separate from military mail, to highlight the complexity of the philatelic aspects involved. Under difficult wartime conditions, ad hoc, perhaps unique methods for the handling of civilian mail through EEF post offices were developed. Most of the remainder of the period falls under the British military Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA), served by its Postal Administration (OETPA), which ended on June 30, 1920 due to the transition to the League of Nations mandated Civil Administration.

This period is important because it covers the end of the long Turkish administration of the region, the start of the modern European influence on the area, and the introduction of aerial mail.

B. Challenge Factor

While literature is readily available for the various army field postmarks, much of the important material has been held by a few collectors until just recently. Several significant collections have come on the market, which has made it possible to more fully tell the story. On display for the first time are grouped key pieces of the collections of Posner, Sacher, Firebrace, Leib, Groten, Van As and Wofchuck.

Firebrace (1) has published the best overall survey of the period, and in many cases documents the paucity of material for any given facet. This scarcity factor outweighs condition; in example the only known prepaid use of the second Palestine adhesive on cover is shown, but represented by the torn 1/5 of an envelope in cover front only (only two covers total with this adhesive are known; multiple post card uses are known). The scarce material is well researched, but new discoveries are possible, such as the prepaid cover from Syria to Lebanon, a previously unrecognized *internal use* within Greater Syria (certified Dorfman 2005). I am still researching the Italian wreck cover *inbound* to Palestine, but believe it to be from the *HMS Warwickshire*, which did carry mail contracts in the period, and was sunk in the Mediterranean Sea.

The exhibit is the culmination of over 15 years of active effort to acquire the best available material of the period. The challenge has clearly been to obtain the key material, then to organize it into a coherent story. There are multiple contemporaneous themes of geography, chronology, and development of postal services, both military and civilian.

C. What is Presented

The military mail is presented by individual Force, specifically to allow examination of the differential use of postmarks, adhesives, censorship practices, and materials in postal use. If this exhibit were presented in a strictly chronological order, without regard to Force, this ability to compare and contrast is largely lost. For each phase shown, an individual Force's mail is presented chronologically.

Civilian Mail, including prepaid use of adhesives introduced for Palestine, is specifically separated. The handling of their mail was most unorthodox, if not unique, in the practice of separate sites of prepayment for and application of the EEF adhesive.

Next, material of the OETA period is shown, that demonstrates the expansion of postal services under the Military Administration government. Expanded rates, i.e. for printed matter and commercial papers were introduced.

To close, uses of Palestine adhesives "abroad" follow, as the British extended their use into adjacent lands captured by the EEF, and the transformation of postal devices for the change to a Civil Administration are shown.

Not shown are postal services of the EEF occupation of TransJordan. While this territory was a part of historic "Greater Syria" (from the Syrian perspective this included modern Israel, Gaza/Sinai, Jordan, and Lebanon), the occupation used overprinted adhesives, not as specifically prepared for use in Palestine.

D. Organization - The exhibit plan is found on the supplied title page.

E. Material Highlights (referenced to exhibit plan)

(Items illustrated in [IFB] or specifically referenced [RFB] in Firebrace, followed by page number)

- 1.1. General Allenby signature cover, Commander of the EEF.
- 1.1. Joseph Trumpeldor signature cover, Jewish Legion organizer.
- 1.2 Very early troopship mail of the ANZACs, two with the very scarce "Loose Letter" handstamp. [see FB pg. 403]
- 2.11. Multiple scarce TPOs *in use for dispatch*.
- 2.12. B.W.I. Contingent wreck cover, considered *the* cover to tie the *HMS Kingstonian* to known wreck mail of the region (RFB pg. 433).
- 2.13. New discovery cover of unknown casualty, Italy to Italian EEF Contingent, Palestine.
- 2.21. First and third recorded covers for civilian use of the Army Post Office {APO} (both *ex. Leibniz*).
- 2.21. Earliest recorded cover for civilian use of the APO to England (*ex. Firebrace*).
- 2.21. Only known First Interim postal card taxed on arrival. [RFB pg. 206]
- 2.21. First Interim only known returned to sender pieces (*ex. Groten*).
- 2.21. Very scarce First Interim *Inland use* of postal card.
- 2.31. *Prepaid* examples of first issue, to both *Inland* and foreign destinations.
- 2.31. The only known second issue *on cover (front piece)* used *prepaid*; also remarkable for its *Inland* destination (*ex. Posner, Wofchuck*). [RFB pg. 205]. Only two uses of second issue are known on cover, exclusive of post cards.
- 2.31. Only recorded period reply card, Palestine to Egypt; *franked for conveyance non-UPU to UPU member*. (*ex. Groten*)
- 2.31. Prepaid examples of fourth issue *ex. the "Assistant Administrator OET Hebron,"* post card and cover. [RFB pg. 208]
- 2.42. Very scarce JAP TPO as strong dispatch strike.
- 2.42. Scarce (believed unique) civilian uses of *Allied Forces* postal services, through French Tresor 601A and 601B.
- 2.42. Scarce cover *ex. French Tresor 601B, Gaza to USA*.
- 2.43. Scarce "Capital 'E' in a Circle" exempt censorship marking on OETA cover to Paris. [IFB pg. 317]
- 2.44. Two examples of the very scarce, uniquely **reintroduced Turkish Safed town postmark** {a}, one registered {b}, spanning the earliest{a} and latest{b} recorded dates, respectively; (*ex. Sacher{a}; ex. Wofchuck {b}*).
- 2.44. Three reintroduced Turkish registration devices, two otherwise unrecorded (one *ex. Wofchuck*).
- 2.45. Early RAF Experimental flight cover Baghdad to Cairo, includes the original official correspondence to the Postmaster General of England, with commentary on arrival in Cairo. This the first westbound flight to help establish the Cairo-Baghdad Desert Air Service via Rafa, Palestine.
- 2.45. EEF Emergency Air Mail cover reused thrice, includes the very scarce circular Aerial Post EEF. (*ex. VanAs*).
- 3.2. Stampless and British franked mail of Lebanon are shown (one *ex. Wofchuck*).
- 3.3. Prepaid uses with EEF adhesives from Syria are shown.
- 3.3. New discovery, the only known prepaid cover with origin/destination in Greater Syria, this sent at the internal letter rate. The cover *ex. Aleppo*, had adhesive Bale No. 9 *applied in Port Said, Egypt*, then was forwarded for delivery to Beirut, Lebanon. (certified Dorfman)
4. Very scarce commercial first day of the Civilian Government postmark.

F. Informational Sources

1. Firebrace, John. *British Empire Campaigns and Occupations in the Near East, 1914-24: A Postal History*, Christies Robson Lowe, London, 1991.
2. Sacher, Michael M. *The Postal Markings of Mandate Palestine 1917-1948*. RPSL, London, 1995.
3. Steir, Joseph. *Bale Palestine: Stamps of Palestine Mandate*, Chariot Global Marketing Ltd., Ramat Gan, 2001.
4. Dorfman, David D. *Palestine Mandate Postmarks*, Tower of David, Inc. Sarasota, FL 1985.